

## SENATE BILL NO. 110

INTRODUCED BY R. RIPLEY

BY REQUEST OF THE FIRE SUPPRESSION COMMITTEE

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ALLOWING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS TO PARTICIPATE IN GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE PLANS ENTERED INTO BY COUNTIES OR THIRD-CLASS CITIES AND TOWNS; ALLOWING THE COUNTY, CITY, OR TOWN TO REQUIRE THE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER TO PAY THE FULL COST OF PARTICIPATION; AND AMENDING SECTION 2-18-702, MCA."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

**Section 1.** Section 2-18-702, MCA, is amended to read:

**"2-18-702. Group insurance for public employees, and officers, and volunteer firefighters.** (1) (a)

Except as provided in subsection (1)(c), all counties, cities, towns, school districts, and the board of regents shall upon approval by two-thirds vote of their respective officers and employees enter into group hospitalization, medical, health, including long-term disability, accident, or group life insurance contracts or plans for the benefit of their officers and employees and their dependents. The laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of marital status in Title 49 do not prohibit bona fide group insurance plans from providing greater or additional contributions for insurance benefits to employees with dependents than to employees without dependents or with fewer dependents.

(b) The governing body of a county, city, or town may, at its discretion, consider the employees of private, nonprofit economic development organizations to be employees of the county, city, or town solely for the purpose of participation in group hospitalization, medical, health, including long-term disability, accident, or group life insurance contracts or plans as provided in subsection (1)(a). The governing body of the county, city, or town may require an employee or organization to pay the actual cost of coverage required for participation or may, at its discretion and subject to any restriction on who may be a member of a group, pay all or part of the cost of coverage of the employee of the organization.

(c) The governing body of a third, fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh class county or the board of trustees of a hospital district may, at its discretion, exempt employees of a county hospital, county rest home, or hospital district from participation in group hospitalization, medical, health, including long-term disability, accident, or group

1 life insurance contracts or plans provided pursuant to subsection (1)(a) or (1)(b).

2 (d) A volunteer firefighter for a governmental fire agency organized under Title 7, chapter 33, may  
3 participate in a group hospitalization, medical, or health benefit plan entered into by a county or a third-class city  
4 or town. The governing body of the county or the third-class city or town may require the volunteer firefighter to  
5 pay the actual cost of coverage required for participation.

6 (2) State employees and elected officials, as defined in 2-18-701, may participate in state employee  
7 group benefit plans as are provided for under part 8 of this chapter.

8 (3) For state officers and employees, the premiums required from time to time to maintain the insurance  
9 in force must be paid by the insured officers and employees, and the state treasurer shall deduct the premiums  
10 from the salary or wages of each officer or employee who elects to become insured, on the officer's or employee's  
11 written order, and issue a warrant for the premiums to the insurer.

12 (4) For the purpose of this section, the plans of health service corporations for defraying or assuming  
13 the cost of professional services of licentiates in the field of health or the services of hospitals, clinics, or  
14 sanitariums or both professional and hospital services must be construed as group insurance and the dues  
15 payable under the plans must be construed as premiums for group insurance.

16 (5) If the board of trustees of a school district implements a self-insured group health plan or if the board  
17 of regents implements an alternative to conventional insurance to provide group benefits to its employees, the  
18 board shall maintain the alternative plan on an actuarially sound basis."

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20 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Volunteer firefighter participation in insurance plan.** As provided in  
21 2-18-702, a volunteer firefighter for a governmental fire agency organized under this chapter may participate in  
22 a group hospitalization, medical, or health benefit plan entered into by a county or a third-class city or town. The  
23 governing body of the county or the third-class city or town may require the volunteer firefighter to pay the actual  
24 cost of coverage required for participation.

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26 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Codification instruction.** [Section 2] is intended to be codified as an  
27 integral part of Title 7, chapter 33, and the provisions of Title 7, chapter 33, apply to [section 2].

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